

VA Health Care Utilization Among Veterans of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom

**VHA Office of Public Health and
Environmental Hazards**

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Roster of War Veterans

- **DMDC preliminary file of OIF and OEF troops using Active Duty and Reserve Pay files, Combat Zone Tax Exclusion, and Imminent Danger Pay data**
- **Latest update partial roster of “separated” war veterans provided to VA June 23, 2004**

Updated Roster

- **168,528** ***OIF Veterans***
 - 50,705 Active duty troops
 - 117,823 Reserve and National Guard
- **45,880** ***OEF Veterans***
 - 4,614 Active duty troops
 - 41,266 Reserve and National Guard
- **10% served in both theaters of conflict**

VA Health Care Utilization

FY '03 & '04

- ***OIF Veterans***

- **16% have sought VA health care since deployment (27,571 of 168,528 veterans)**
- **489 hospitalized at least once at VA**

- ***OEF Veterans***

- **11% have sought VA health care since deployment (5,113 of 45,880 veterans)**
- **127 hospitalized at least once at VA**
- **47% Afghan veterans seeking VA health care also served in OIF**

Combined OIF/OEF Separated Veterans FY '03 & '04

- ***194,686 OIF & OEF Veterans Combined***
 - **15.6% (30,295) have sought VA health care**
 - **0.29% (568) hospitalized at least once at VA**
- ***Among 53,200 Active Duty Troops***
 - **23.2% (12,351) have sought VA health care since deployment**
 - **0.4% (219) hospitalized at least once at VA**

(Cont.) Combined OIF & OEF Separated Veterans *FY '03 & '04*

- ***141,486 Reserve/National Guard Members combined***
 - **12.7% (17,944) have sought VA health care since deployment**
 - **0.2% (349) hospitalized at least once at VA**

Impact on VA Health Care

- ***VA evaluated 27,571 OIF veterans in FY '03/'04***
- ***Equals 0.6% of the 4.5 million veterans receiving VA health care in 2002***

Impact on VA Health Care (cont)

- ***In April '04, 7,916 OIF veterans had one or more VA health care visits***
 - **Predominantly clinic appointments**
 - **Average of 50 veterans at each of 158 VA hospitals in April, or**
 - **Fewer than 2 per day per hospital**
- ***So far, OIF veterans are a small proportion of total VA patients***

Demographic Characteristics of OIF & OEF Veterans Utilizing VA Health Care

| | | Iraqi Freedom Percent (n=27,571) | | Enduring Freedom Percent | |
|-----------|---------------|-------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|--|
| (n=5,113) | | | | | |
| Sex | | | | | |
| | Male | 87 | | 88 | |
| | Female | 13 | | 12 | |
| Age Group | | | | | |
| | <20 | < 1 | | < 1 | |
| | 20-29 | 52 | | 34 | |
| | 30-39 | 23 | | 26 | |
| | ≥40 | 25 | | 40 | |
| Branch | | | | | |
| | Air Force | 14 | | 31 | |
| | Army | 57 | | 64 | |
| | Marine | 15 | | 1 | |
| | Navy | 14 | | 4 | |
| Unit Type | | | | | |
| | Active | 43 | | 20 | |
| | Reserve/Guard | 57 | | 80 | |
| Rank | | | | | |
| | Enlisted | 92 | | 88 | |
| | Officer | 8 | | 12 | |

Diagnoses

- **OIF & OEF veterans have presented to VA with a wide range of medical and psychological conditions**
- **Diagnoses have encompassed more than 3,800 discrete ICD-9 diagnostic codes**
- **Most common diagnoses have been musculoskeletal ailments, principally joint and back disorders, and dental problems**

Frequency of Diagnoses for OIF Veterans

| Diagnosis (ICD-9 Categories) | (n = 27,571) | Frequency ¹ | % | |
|--|--------------|------------------------|-------|------|
| Infectious and Parasitic Diseases (001-139) | | | 1,888 | 6.9 |
| Malignant Neoplasms (140-208) | 153 | | 0.6 | |
| Benign Neoplasms (210-239) | 473 | | 1.7 | |
| Diseases of Endocrine/Nutritional/ Metabolic Systems (240-279) | | | 2,666 | 9.7 |
| Diseases of Blood and Blood Forming Organs (280-289) | | 275 | | 1.0 |
| Mental Disorders (290-319) | | 5,375 | | 19.5 |
| Diseases of Nervous System/ Sense Organs (320-389) | | | 5,311 | 19. |
| Diseases of Circulatory System (390-459) | | | 2,635 | 9.6 |
| Disease of Respiratory System (460-519) | | | 3,505 | 12. |
| Disease of Digestive System (520-579) | | 6,788 | | 24.6 |
| Diseases of Genitourinary System (580-629) | | | 1,674 | 6. |
| Diseases of Skin (680-709) | | | 2,520 | 9.1 |
| Diseases of Musculoskeletal System/Connective System (710-739) | | | 8,134 | 29. |
| Symptoms, Signs and Ill Defined Conditions (780-799) | | | 5,674 | 20. |
| Injury/Poisonings (800-999) | | | 3,195 | 11.6 |

¹ Hospitalizations and outpatient visits as of 6/28/04; veterans can have multiple diagnoses with each healthcare encounter. However, a veteran is counted only once in any single Diagnostic Category but can be counted in multiple categories.

Frequency of Diagnoses for OEF Veterans

| Diagnosis (ICD-9 Categories) | (n = 5,113) | Frequency ¹ | % |
|--|-------------|------------------------|------|
| Infectious and Parasitic Diseases (001-139) | | 403 | 7.9 |
| Malignant Neoplasms (140-208) | 52 | 1.0 | |
| Benign Neoplasms (210-239) | 141 | 2.8 | |
| Diseases of Endocrine/Nutritional/ Metabolic Systems (240-279) | | 729 | 14.3 |
| Diseases of Blood and Blood Forming Organs (280-289) | 69 | 1.4 | |
| Mental Disorders (290-319) | 915 | 17.9 | |
| Diseases of Nervous System/ Sense Organs (320-389) | | 1,045 | 20.4 |
| Diseases of Circulatory System (390-459) | | 706 | 13.8 |
| Disease of Respiratory System (460-519) | | 777 | 15.2 |
| Disease of Digestive System (520-579) | 1,109 | 21.7 | |
| Diseases of Genitourinary System (580-629) | | 379 | 7.4 |
| Diseases of Skin (680-709) | | 543 | 10.6 |
| Diseases of Musculoskeletal System/Connective System (710-739) | | 1,537 | 30.1 |
| Symptoms, Signs and Ill Defined Conditions (780-799) | | 1,117 | 21.9 |
| Injury/Poisonings (800-999) | | 650 | 12.7 |

¹ Hospitalizations and outpatient visits as of 6/28/04; veterans can have multiple diagnoses with each healthcare encounter. However, a veteran is counted only once in any single Diagnostic Category but can be counted in multiple categories.

Comparing Diagnoses OIF and OEF Veterans

Percentage of Veterans

with

Diagnosis

Most common ICD-9 diagnostic categories

Afghanistan

Iraq

| | | |
|------------|----|------------------------------|
| 1. | | Diseases of Musculoskeletal |
| System | 30 | 30 |
| 2. | | Diseases of Digestive System |
| | | 22 25 |
| 3. | | Signs, Symptoms, Ill-Defined |
| Conditions | | 22 21 |
| 4. | | Diseases of Nervous System |
| | | 20 19 |
| 5. | | Mental Disorders |

Frequency of Mental Disorders Among OIF & OEF Veterans

| Disease Category (ICD 290-319 code) Veterans ¹ | Number of | |
|--|----------------------|-------------------------|
| | <i>Iraqi Freedom</i> | <i>Enduring Freedom</i> |
| Adjustment Reaction (309)* | 2,279 | 298 |
| Nondependent Abuse of Drugs (305) | 1,867 | 357 |
| Depressive Disorders (311) | 1,537 | 266 |
| Neurotic Disorders (300) | 1,240 | 217 |
| Affective Psychoses (296) | 800 | 144 |
| Alcohol Dependence Syndrome (303) | 292 | 79 |
| Sexual Deviations and Disorders (302) | 211 | 70 |
| Acute Reaction to Stress (308) | 169 | -- |
| Special Symptoms, Not Elsewhere Classified (307) | 165 | 38 |
| Personality Disorders (301) | 116 | 26 |

*This category currently includes a total of 1,743 Iraqi and Afghan veterans with a diagnosis of PTSD (ICD-9CM 309.81)

Findings

- **Separated OIF and OEF veterans have experienced similar health problems**
- **16% rate of VA health care usage among separated OIF veterans (16%) is higher compared to OEF veterans (11%)**

Findings (cont)

- **Higher percentage of separated active duty troops (23%) have sought VA health care compared to Reservist/National Guard personnel (13%)**
- **Little change in frequency of particular diagnoses from month to month**
- **No unusual health problem stands out at present**

Summary

- **OIF and OEF veterans are presenting to VA with a wide range of both medical and psychological conditions**
- **Recommendations cannot be provided for particular testing or evaluation - veterans should be assessed individually to identify all outstanding health problems**

Summary (cont)

- **Recent war veterans have ready access to VA health care, which is free of charge for two years following separation for any health problem possibly related to wartime service**
- **VHA will continue to monitor the health status of recent war veterans using updated deployment lists provided by DoD to ensure that VA tailors its health care and disability programs to meet the needs of this newest generation of war veterans**